



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director and Chief Equity Officer

### MEMORANDUM

October 17, 2023

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director  
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director  
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #24-13  
FY24 Capital Budget Montgomery County Hydrogen Fuel Cell Fueling Station

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #24-13 FY24 Capital Budget Montgomery County Hydrogen Fuel Cell Fueling Station has the potential to advance racial equity and social justice. However, there's insufficient information to determine the scale or depth of potential racial equity impacts.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #24-13 FY24 Capital Budget Montgomery County Hydrogen Fuel Cell Fueling Station project is to allocate \$14,875,975 for new hydrogen fuel production and a fueling station in Montgomery County, which will power the County's first 13 hydrogen fuel cell buses. Available information indicates that the source of funds is Federal Aid—Federal Transit Administration Low or No Emission Grant Program along with matching funds from the Ride On Bus project.

ORESJ has written extensively about the critical role public transportation plays in filling economic and opportunity gaps created by structural racism. We've also documented that for similar (and additional reasons), BIPOC and low-income communities often face the most acute consequences of climate change while having fewer resources for responding to and recovering from climate events. A sample of related REIAs is below:

- [Racial Equity Impact Assessment \(REIA\) Supplemental Appropriation \(SA# 24-4 Good Hope Road Shared Use Path Project \(CIP No. 501902\)](#)
- [Racial Equity Impact Assessment \(REIA\) Supplemental Appropriation \(SA\) FY23-28 Capital Improvement Program \(CIP\) and Special Appropriation #23-53 FY23 Capital Budget Montgomery County Government, Department of Transportation Bus Rapid Transit \(BRT\): US 29 Phase 2 \(CIP No. 502201\)](#)
- [Supplemental Appropriation: Transportation Services Improvement Fund Fuel Reimbursement Disbursement](#)
- [Supplemental Appropriation: Amaranth Drive Emergency Culvert](#)
- [Supplemental Appropriation: Hidden Valley Culvert Repair](#)

Specifically related to transit inequities, evidence from the Climate Action Plan shows that a majority of BIPOC and low-income communities in the County live near major roadways and that they are more likely to live near traffic, leaving these communities both more vulnerable to negative health outcomes and pedestrian and traffic-related accidents<sup>1</sup>.

According to available information, this project sets out to “reduce carbon emissions, increase the reliability and sustainability of the bus fleet, and is an essential step in the transition to a zero-emissions fleet to reach the goals of the County’s Climate Action Plan”. A zero-emission fleet will create universal greenhouse gas reduction benefits in the County; the localized benefits by zip code or other geographic area are difficult to quantify. If, however, these hydrogen fuel cell buses can reduce emissions on a localized level and are used along routes where majorities of BIPOC and low-income communities reside, it is possible that these buses could help to reduce some health disparities though they are unlikely to change traffic patterns at a scale. Additional information that would be useful in determining short and longer-term racial equity impacts:

- Specificity about the 13 impacted buses and bus routes, estimated demographics of riders and residents along bus routes.
- Estimates for current localized greenhouse gas emissions at the fueling site and along affected bus routes.
- The extent to which Ride On ridership is aware of the transition to zero-emission buses and how they rank the fuel and fueling project among other climate and transit initiatives.
- A potential evaluation and expansion plan to determine ongoing costs and benefits.

cc: Chris Conklin, Director, Department of Transportation  
Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/climate/Resources/Files/climate/climate-action-plan.pdf>